

encapsulated — a tedious process. I usually try to bribe my son to do it or just buy it ready-made from a retail source. Goldenseal is an excellent herb for use in capsules. Sometimes the herbs are powdered and *not* encapsulated. For instance, with stomach ulceration the herbs should be powdered, mixed with liquid, and consumed. This allows the herb to make contact with the entire affected area. If the ulceration is in the duodenum, which lies just below the stomach, then capsules would be used. The capsules tend to sit at the bottom of the stomach and then drop through into the duodenum, where they are needed. Duodenal ulcers are often accompanied by painful cramping or spasming. This can be alleviated by the addition of a few drops of peppermint essential oil to the herbal mixture before encapsulating it.

Caution

As with all medicines, it is important with both adults and children to pay close attention to how they respond to herbs. Start with small doses and work up. At any sign of adverse reactions, the herb should be discontinued. If severe symptoms persist, consult a competent health care provider.

USING ESSENTIAL OILS

Essential oils are made by distilling volatile oils from plants. Essential oil makes up $\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 percent of a plant's weight, most plants tending toward the lower end of the scale. For a plant that is 1 percent essential oil, it will take 100 ounces of plant (a little over 6 pounds [$2\frac{3}{4}$ kg]) to get 1 ounce (30 ml) of essential oil.

Knowledge of herbal medicine was considered exceptionally important for prospective wives and mothers during the Middle Ages, and few homes did not have their own "still rooms" where herbal medicines were prepared. Distilling plant essences was a part of this herbal knowledge for many women, and aromatherapy had its birth in rudimentary form in Europe at that time. Most people buy their essential oils, but I have met a few wise women who are reclaiming this long-lost tradition and are distilling their own essences from the plants that grow in the fields and valleys near their homes. Most of us, however, buy them ready-made.